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The Alabama Forestry Commission and the Southern Research Station of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service recently completed a Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) study of our state's forest resource. Some of the results were astounding.

For instance:

- Alabama has 22.9 million acres of forestland - up one million acres from the 1990 survey.
- 71% of Alabama is forested.
- Over three-quarters (78%) of Alabama's forestland is owned by private non-industrial landowners.
- There are 4,000 trees for every man, woman, and child in the state.
- 64% of the state's forests are hardwood or a hardwood/pine mix.

Alabama has the second largest commercial forest in the nation, with Georgia being the leader. This resource supports our state's largest manufacturing industry - forest products. Across the state the forest industry directly and indirectly employs 170,000 workers with a payroll of \$2.2 billion.

Our state's forest resource also attracts many tourists and visitors each year through recreational opportunities like hunting and fishing, boating, and camping.

This healthy resource was no accident. It is through the hard work and planning of many natural resource agencies and groups as well as private forest landowners that make Alabama's forest resource a state TREASURE.

If you look back in time, rarely has there been a crisis or disaster around the world in which Alabamians did not answer the cry for help. Either by the giving of resources or of themselves, Alabama citizens possess the true sense of caring. When disasters have hit our own state such as Hurricanes Frederick and Opal, the deadly tornadoes in Madison and Jefferson counties, or the disastrous flood at Elba, our citizens have always been there to provide aid and support to their fellow Alabamians.

Across America, they have been on the front lines fighting fires, stacking sand bags, manning soup kitchens, cleaning up, tearing down, and rebuilding; lending medical aid and giving their blood as well as their moral support in every crisis imaginable. And from South America, to Africa, to Europe, and the Middle East, there will rarely be a disaster in which one or more Alabamians do not rise to whatever unfortunate occasion and volunteer to give unselfishly to those in need.

In the military history of our nation, Alabama has joined her sister southern states in providing more soldiers than any other area of the nation. Currently hundreds of brave men and women from Alabama are overseas protecting the precious rights that we value so much.

Alabama is blessed with some of the most abundant natural resources in the world, but by far our most valuable resource is not found in the fertile soil, vast forestland, or rushing cool waters. Our most valuable resource is hidden in the hearts of our people.